XXI

FROM CALCUTTA TO RANGOON, BANGKOK AND SINGAPORE

A WEEK in Calcutta enabled me to complete my business, and once more take the air on my journey further East, and again before sunrise I found myself once more on the Dum Dum aerodrome, a spot now becoming very familiar owing to my repeated visits, and at 6.30 a.m. the great hangar was lost in the distance as the plane headed for the Sunderbands and Cox's Bazar, being, of course, a repetition of the journey made the week previous when taking part in the inauguration of the Air Mail service. There is, therefore, no need to recapitulate or describe the present trip, except to chronicle the fact that it was upon this second journey to Rangoon that I attained the maximum height in aeroplane travel. After landing at Akyab and having crossed the mountains on the Arakan coast, we steadily climbed until the great height of 13,000 feet was reached, and I shall not readily forget the sublime spectacle as at this altitude we seemed to have left mother earth entirely. Beneath us were great billowy masses of Cirro Cumulus clouds, above us swirling masses of vapour and mist, which at times completely enveloped the plane, then suddenly the mists would be torn asunder and a stream of dazzling sunlight would convert the clouds to golden splendour, while at times curious rainbow effects in complete circular shape would form on the clouds beneath our keel, and the miniature shadow of the

plane would be silhouetted 1,000 feet below on a low strata of cloud. An entrancing sight never to be forgotten. Rangoon once more, right on time, and here we spent the night, previous to an early start the following morning for Bangkok, the capital of Siam. While the engines are being warmed up ready for the start, I will endeavour to answer some queries often addressed to me as to what are the effects and experiences of travel by air. Generally the first question is, "Are you troubled with air sickness?" Personally I have been entirely free from this. During the whole of my air journeys, approximating possibly up to date a distance of 35,000 miles, I have suffered no inconvenience whatever. On some constitutions I believe air sickness is suffered, but the same results would, of course, be felt by these people on a sea journey. There is, however, at considerable heights a buzzing in the ears, which can be minimised by the insertion of a wad of cotton wool in the ears, and the act of swallowing will always remove the drumming experienced at heights in excess of say 5,000 feet, and this effect is felt by all travellers by air as far as I know. There is usually, when taking off, a feeling of uncertainty as to whether the plane will clear the hedges of the aerodrome, and for some time after taking to air travel, I have always felt relieved when we were well away, but after several air trips this feeling disappears entirely, especially when it is realised that when a maximum speed is attained on the ground the plane must rise when the joy stick is pulled, and thus this natural anxiety can be speedily dispelled.

Again, when making preparations to land, one wonders, when glancing at the altitude meter, which generally registers zero even when some five or six hundred feet in height, whether there is not the danger of the wing touching the ground,

[*By courtesy of the Dutch Air Lines*

CENTRE OF WELTEVREDEN, JAVA

[*By courtesy of Imperial Airways*

SIAMESE RIVER VILLAGE

Showing the Floating Houses

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and bringing about a catastrophe, but the pilot can sense, so to speak, the margin of space at his disposal, and here again the doubts and anxieties can be dispelled when the passenger has experienced a number of landings.

I am sometimes asked of the effect on the nervous system when considerable heights are attained; does the passenger suffer from dizziness as when looking over the edge of a high building? In my case, and I think with others also, there is no dizziness experienced when travelling either by balloon (and I may say I have made several lengthy trips in balloons from time to time), or aeroplane, which I think is owing to the fact that there is nothing with which to measure the distance to the earth, such as the wall of a high building, and air travel can be safely recommended to a nervous person, even to one who cannot look down from a moderate height on terra firma.

The acceleration of the engines, and the withdrawing of the blocks in front of the landing wheels announce that we are off once more, and taxi-ing across the asphalt surface on to the grass of the aerodrome we are soon aloft and heading direct for Bangkok, the capital of Siam, some 364 miles distant. Once again we view the winding course of the Irrawaddy, with the Shwe Dagon Pagoda glistening in the morning sunlight, and settling down in our chairs for the three hours' and a half journey to Siam. Previous to our embarkation a little formality had to be gone through, by the handing over of our cameras to the pilot, as the Siamese authorities forbid most emphatically the taking of photographs while flying over their country. Seeing that every portion of the journey must have been many times photographed by pilots and private owners of aeroplanes, this restriction seemed to me rather a useless proceed-

ing, and entirely uncalled for, but the regulations insist upon it, and therefore we said good-bye for the time being to our pocket cameras until we had passed over Siamese territory and entered the Malay States. Shortly after 10.30 a.m. we were alighting on the aerodrome, some twelve miles from Bangkok, and here breakfast was served while the refuelling and the delivery and collection of the mails was proceeded with, and fifty minutes later we were heading due south and the city of Bangkok, situated picturesquely on the Menan river, came into view. The buildings and elaborately laid-out grounds of the King's palace stood out prominently and other public buildings were objects of interest, and it was with regret that this splendid view of this well laid-out capital could not be prolonged, but aerial travel has the disadvantage from the spectator's view of giving too little time for a detailed examination of objects of interest, so we had to content ourselves with the shipping on the river, as we followed its course southward to the Gulf of Siam, and soon we were flying over the sea before striking the eastern coast of the Malay Peninsula. Flying at an altitude of 8,000 feet we had a splendid view of the innumerable islands and lagoons which lie scattered along the coast, when, after passing Chumporn, we passed directly over the island of Ko Samari. Altering our course slightly westward we had a view right across the Malay Peninsula, both eastern and western coastlines being clearly discernible, while directly beneath us were to be seen the rubber plantations which for the next portion of our journey were to be the most prominent feature of the landscape. The town of Singora was visible before losing sight of the eastern coast, and after covering the 570 miles between Bangkok and 'Alor Star in a little over five hours we arrived in time for tea at the landing

ground of Alor Star, some six miles or more from the town. Here we spent the night in the wooden rest house, protected against mosquitoes by mosquito nets, only to be awakened before daylight at 4.30 a.m. in order that an early start could be made for the last portion of the journey down the Malay States to Singapore. The Malay Peninsula throughout its whole length is covered with vegetation, its humid atmosphere and copious rains evidently being responsible for the great jungles which seem interminable, and except where the hand of man has made vast clearings, chiefly by burning, as the most expeditious way of clearing the country, the landscape appears as it must have done for countless centuries. The rubber plantations, however, have, during the last few years, made a great change in the countryside, and scattered throughout the country from north to south and from east to west can be seen thousands upon thousands of acres upon which vast forests of rubber trees are flourishing. The tin mines are also a feature of the country, especially in the neighbourhood of Ipoh, and here great timber erections, rising to immense heights necessary for the washing of the ore by Malay coolie women, after the soil has been forced from the hillsides by water pressure directed by steam pressure through hoses similar to those used by firemen, which, after passing through long wooden troughs, is afterwards pumped up to the top of the wooden piers for treatment. We fly mile after mile over a country which would make a landing in case of emergency a matter of impossibility, as from our altitude not a vestige of clear ground was visible, the whole country from end to end being covered by vast forests, from which emerged at intervals towering trees, monarchs of the forest, which no doubt in the near future will share the fate of

their fellows and be replaced by plantations of rubber trees. Far to the south appears a streak of water, which on closer approach turned out to be the straits which separate the island of Johore from the mainland of the Malay Peninsula. Numerous fishing vessels could be seen, and more interesting still to us was the great floating dock, which had been towed out in two portions from England and whose huge bulk could be clearly discerned, as it lay moored in midstream, carrying in its vast interior a ten thousand ton steamship undergoing repairs. Further along the coast under course of construction is the vast British naval base which, on completion, will enable the British fleet to make a home far from home, in which the refitting and repairing of our largest battleships can be undertaken with the same facility as in our home dockyards, and form a strong bulwark for the defence of our Empire. Singapore possesses one of the most efficient aerodromes in the British Empire, and as we approached bombing planes could be seen manœuvring at dizzy heights, turning and twisting in endless evolutions, while on the ground an army of engineers and mechanics were busily employed in vast workshops, where planes in course of repair and refitting were having attention, while further away were several great hangars for the housing of the Air Liners which now make their regular weekly visits.

XXII

FROM SINGAPORE TO PALEMBANG AND BATAVIA

SINGAPORE, the Gate of the Far East, lies at the southern extremity of the Malay Peninsula and is situated on an island some twenty-seven miles long by fourteen miles broad. It has a population of about half a million, made up of a number of different nationalities, comprising about 67,000 Malays, 7,000 Europeans, nearly 400,000 Chinese, 40,000 Indians and some 15,000 of other nationalities. The port of Singapore, situated on the sea's highway between China and Japan on the East and India and Europe on the West, is one of the largest and most important ports in the world. There are about two miles of wharves, at which an incredible number of vessels find accommodation. The harbour is capable of holding all the navies of the world at the same time. The town contains some fine buildings, and recently a new Post Office has been built standing in a commanding position on the sea front, and the new Municipal House stands out prominently, especially when viewed from the sea. Singapore at the time of my aerial visit was the terminus of the Imperial Airways service, and it became necessary, if my business tour was to be extended to the Dutch East Indies, that arrangements must be made with the Dutch Air lines for the extension of my trip through Sumatra and Java. The following morning, therefore, I paid a visit to the head office of the Koninklijke Nederlandsch Indische Luchtvaart

Maatschappij (Royal Netherlands Indian Airways), familiarly known as the K.N.I.L.M., and was very courteously received by the Managing Director. On placing before him the object of my journey to the Far East, viz. the possibilities of the business man and manufacturer availing themselves of aerial transport, and the saving of time as compared with rail and steamer, he at once entered into the spirit of my pioneer work by placing a seat in the next outgoing plane at my service, which was to leave Singapore two days later. The K.N.I.L.M. have a weekly service between Singapore and Batavia, with a short stop at Palembang, in Southern Sumatra. A service twice daily is made between Batavia and Bandoeng, the holiday resort in the Preanger Mountains. A daily service also runs between Batavia and Sourabaya, besides other routes in North Sumatra. By availing myself of the planes serving these various routes I was thus enabled to make a complete tour from Singapore, across the Straits to Palembang, in Southern Sumatra, thence across the Straits of Sunda to Batavia and from that town to traverse by air the whole length of the island of Java to Sourabaya, which was the furthest point eastward of my tour. The service is maintained by a fleet of triple-engined Fokker planes, seating eight passengers. A feature of the Fokker plane is that the cabin is located under the wing, which acts as a sunshade and protects travellers from the rays of the tropical sun, besides enabling them to have an unrestricted view of the surrounding country. Two days later, after an early breakfast, I found myself once again on the capacious aerodrome a few miles outside Singapore, where the three propellers of the Fokker plane were revolving as if anxious to be away in their element. No time was lost, and the passengers,

together with the baggage safely on board, were speeding along the asphalt, and soon circling the town and harbour at some 3,000 feet altitude. Fewer panoramas in the world can excel the bird's eye view over Singapore harbour. Immediately below the breakwater, and taking advantage of its protection, numberless vessels of every size imaginable were either riding at anchor, or moored against the jetties, unloading their cargoes from all parts of the civilized world. Hurrying to and fro were launches darting through the crowded waterway, with an occasional screech of the siren to hasten the sampan out of danger as it skimmed the short waves, scarcely bigger than a cockle shell as it seemed from our altitude. Further in the roadstead were to be seen tramp steamers at anchor, and here and there some big liner on its holiday jaunt round the world with its hundreds of American tourists making a hurried visit to the earth's capitals. As we neared the narrow entrance to Singapore harbour, a big P. & O. liner *en route* for China, was slowly making her way to her berth, with two tugs in attendance waiting to manœuvre her into position. Higher up the hill to the right was the signal station, with flags flying, while scattered about the hillside were a number of attractive bungalows, the residences of various port officials.

But we are steadily rising, a wisp of vapour passes the windows of the plane and a glance at the instrument notifies us that we are upwards of 5,000 feet above sea level. Into the clouds which are now gathering round us, out into the brilliant sunshine once more as we emerge, and as the clouds disperse we behold a multitude of small islands scattered around, all covered with vegetation, and on several of the larger ones were to be seen quite fair-sized bungalows with gardens to

the water's edge, making a pretty picture as we crossed directly overhead. Flying steadily westward we at length leave the islands behind us, and are now rapidly approaching the long low coastline of Sumatra. As we near the island, covered almost completely with dense vegetation almost to the water's edge, one is given the impression that here is real virgin soil untouched by the hand of man, and of life there seems no trace if an occasional bird winging its way across the plain is excepted. Nearer we come, until at last we are flying over what appears to be dense forest land, with at intervals streams winding their way to the coast, but for the most part hidden by trees which grow in profusion on their banks. The entire western half of the island from north to south is mountainous, but on the contrary the mountains on the east coast slope off more gradually into foot hills, which in turn give way to broad coastal plains, through which the great rivers flow to empty themselves into the straits of Malacca, the South China Sea and the Java Sea. The mangrove thickets, which seem endless, stretch along the coast, and retain the silt brought down by the rivers, and new land is being continually formed which is covered at once with a green layer of vegetation. In this way Sumatra is constantly growing towards the east, while the powerful erosion of the Indian Ocean on the west—especially in certain districts—is wearing away the foreshore, which is already all too narrow. The gains on the east coast are, however, many times greater than the losses on the west. Sumatra possesses a number of high mountains of considerable size, the highest being Mount Korintji, some 12,000 feet high, and a number of others of almost the same altitude. Compared with the population of Java, which supports some 40,000,000 inhabitants,

Sumatra, with merely 8,000,000 people, leaves room for much development in the future.

We have now been flying nearly three hours, and our first stop is Palembang, situated on the left bank of the Moesi river, about fifty-six miles from its mouth. We alight at the aerodrome a few miles distant from the town, where an hour is allowed for refreshments and refuelling.

Aloft once more, we are now flying almost directly due south, and have now covered some 303 miles since leaving Singapore and still having some 277 miles yet to cover before reaching Batavia, in Java. We cross several good-sized streams, but the country seems all forest, and one wonders what sort of landing would be made should by any chance it become necessary to descend in this jungle country. At last the forests come to an end, directly ahead lies the open sea, and soon we are flying over the Straits of Sunda, ever memorable for the great earthquake which startled the world when the volcano of Krakatoa split in twain, causing a tidal wave to sweep over the surrounding coasts, which swept upwards of 30,000 souls into Eternity. But this trip we leave Krakatoa and its memories well to the westward, but as compensation we have a magnificent view of the thousand islands, which are a sight never to be forgotten by those fortunate to view them from the air. Scattered about the sea as from a gigantic pepper box, the islands seem to extend to the horizon on all sides. Of every shape and form, they lie almost level with the water's edge, in no case more than a few feet above the surface. The sea presents a most fascinating spectacle, being dazzling green, and under the brilliant sunlight, formed all shades of colouring, which a painter would have loved to put on canvas, if indeed such brilliant colouring could be reproduced.

A number of fishing boats could be seen at work, and on a few of the larger islands some fishermen's huts could be distinguished, but the vast majority of the thousand islands are but the home of the seabirds, who make their home in this romantic region of the earth.

It was with real regret that we said good-bye to this most interesting part of the journey, as the shores of Java loomed into view, as we approached the north-west coast of the island. We leave the sea slightly to the west of the harbour of Tanjong Priok, created by the artificial construction of two long breakwaters, which enclose a vast acreage of safe anchorage and where several steamers of the K.P.M. (Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij) lay at their moorings. But Batavia is some six miles inland, so we proceed on our way until the red roofs of the pretty bungalows in the environs of Batavia appear ahead, and still several miles further before we alight on the aerodrome of Tjililitan, some few minutes' flying from the town. We glide down, light as a feather, and taxi to the buildings at the extremity of the flying ground, where the Customs authorities evince some little interest in one's baggage, but accepted my assurance that I carried nothing dutiable, and I am at liberty to drive into the town where I am shortly established in the Hotel des Indes, a sumptuous hotel extending over a vast area, where in the grounds some enormous trees give welcome shade to the visitor.

[*By courtesy of Dutch Air Lines*

North Coast of Java
With Slamat Volcano, Dutch East Indies

[*By courtesy of Dutch Air Lines*

Eruption of Slamat Volcano
Dutch East Indies

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XXIII

FROM BATAVIA TO SEMARANG AND SOURABAYA

BATAVIA is the capital of the Dutch East Indies, and is situated near the western extremity of the northern coast of Java. Its population is about half a million, comprising Javanese, Chinese, Europeans and Japanese. Like most old colonial cities Batavia consists of two parts, Old Batavia and the more modern town of Weltevreden, now known as Batavia-Centrum. The main road connecting the old town with the new is called Molenvliet (Mill stream), and runs along the banks of the river Tjiliwong. Built in the old Dutch style, with numerous intersecting canals and narrow streets, Old Batavia is a quaint and picturesque town. Batavia-Centrum is the European centre, and where the chief shopping centre, clubs and hotels are to be found. To the south lies the beautiful Koningsplein, a wide open space near which the Government offices, library and museums are located.

Two days sufficed for me to complete my business in the town, so an early breakfast was made two days later and at 7.30 we were soaring over the aerodrome heading due east for Semarang. From the commencement of this day's flight we had an uninterrupted view of the great volcanoes which, like a backbone, extend from one end of the country to the other. There are somewhere about a hundred volcanoes in the island of Java, but only a few are at present active. From Batavia to Sourabaya, almost the whole distance is traversed

along the northern coastline, and shortly after leaving the aerodrome we passed over the port of Cheribon, a busy little harbour with a number of small craft at their moorings, and from this point we kept in view the long range of volcanic mountains which remain a continuous feature of the landscape. There is a great saving of time by airplane between Batavia and Sourabaya. The train journey takes fourteen hours to cover the distance, while in striking contrast the aerial journey occupies but some five and a half hours, thus the traveller can breakfast in the former town, and be in ample time for lunch in Sourabaya. By ten o'clock we alighted at the curiously shaped landing ground of Semarang, being situated on the slope of a hill, and which calls for no little skill in landing. It is surrounded by hills, and one wonders where any landing can be made, as until almost on the point of making contact with the ground, it is difficult for the observer not previously conversant with the locality to locate it. The Dutch pilots, however, have no difficulty, and with a quick curve we are sliding down amongst the numerous hills, and the plane comes to a standstill midway on a sloping field, collecting the mails for Sourabaya. Fifteen minutes is ample, and once more we are in the air on the last hop of my journey to the Far East, Sourabaya being my final destination, and which completed ten thousand miles of aerial transport from Croydon. Another hour and a half in the air, and the environs of Sourabaya appeared in the distance. We planed down, and taxied to the reception room and Customs office, which examination completed, I am transferred to a luxurious motor saloon, and driven through the attractive suburbs of Sourabaya. My outward journey was now accomplished.

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[By courtesy of "The Times"; photo Infra Red process

HISTORIC GREECE SEEN FROM THE AIR

XXIV

FROM SOURABAYA TO SINGAPORE

SOURABAYA, the greatest commercial port of Java, is situated at the mouth of the Kali Mas (Golden River) facing Madura Island. The population is approximately 370,000, including 26,000 Europeans and 40,000 Chinese, the latter holding almost a monopoly in certain trades, which is also the case in other towns of the Dutch East Indies. The port of Sourabaya is situated several miles from the city, and steamers of considerable tonnage can berth at the jetties. Three floating docks are available, the largest of these being 14,000 tons capacity. The Darmo aerodrome is in the upper town, fifteen minutes by car from the lower town and forty-five minutes from the harbour.

Sourabaya has no special attractions to offer the visitor, but it is the centre for many interesting trips among the Tengger mountains, and the volcano of Smeroe, the highest volcano in Java, presents an imposing sight. From Sourabaya also is the starting point for the trip to the island of Bali, one of the most interesting places in the islands, for here is seen the native life, almost untouched by civilization, and is within thirteen hours' steamboat journey from Sourabaya. Here can be seen the ancient temples, with their sacrificial altars, the great cremation ceremonies, and the native dances. The Balinese descendants of the old Hindu tribes that ruled Java some centuries ago, contrived to preserve their religion and rites against the Islamic influence. Their mythical

dances, presenting entrancing scenes, are performed daily. Three days in the town sufficed for the completion of my business affairs, and I now turn my face homewards to retraverse in the air my adventurous and most interesting journey in the interests of commercial aviation. The plane was waiting my arrival at the Darmo aerodrome, two Dutchmen having already arrived, who informed me of their weekly aeroplane journey to Batavia, to whom it had now become a matter of routine. My suitcase and typewriter duly weighed, myself included, having it appeared, due no doubt to the good cooking of the Dutch chefs gained nearly two pounds in weight, although I hoped it was not noticeable, the door was closed, the engines accelerated and I am at last on the first stage of my return journey to Europe. Six hours later after the usual call at Semarang, we alight at the aerodrome at Batavia, where the night is spent at the hotel, and the following morning sees me early astir for the trip across the Straits of Sunda and the thousand islands, and later amongst the clouds of Sumatra until we alight for refuelling at the Palembang aerodrome. Once more aloft we cross the sea and the archipelago of islands between Sumatra and Malaya, and later in the afternoon glide gracefully down to the Singapore flying ground, where I say goodbye with regret to the Dutch pilot who has conveyed me so swiftly and with security across mountain, sea, river and swamp, on one of the most interesting aerial journeys in the eastern hemisphere.

XXV

FROM SINGAPORE TO PENANG

On my arrival at Singapore, finding that the Imperial Airways plane "Athena" would not start on the home journey for several days, I determined to make a call at Penang, picking up the plane on its arrival at Alor Star. It was therefore necessary to arrange for either land or sea transit from Singapore to Penang, and I had the choice of a night train journey, or as an alternative an all night sea trip by the fine turbine steamer, *Kedah*, which accomplishes the voyage in twenty hours at an average speed of nineteen knots, and is without doubt the fastest passenger steamer plying in the Malacca Straits. The Straits Steamship Co. Ltd., founded in the year 1890, has progressed steadily in the development of services to meet the requirements of trade and travel, keeping abreast of all the improvements of ship design and equipment calculated to make travel more comfortable and the carriage of cargo more efficient. The fleet, fifty ships in all, range from special craft of under fifty tons, constructed to navigate minor ports situated up river, to fast and spacious passenger vessels of 2,000 tons and over. The supreme example of the latter is the *Kedah*, specially designed for the Singapore–Penang run, and I needed little persuasion to book my berth by this boat for this portion of my return journey.

It may be of interest to mention that quite an extensive area is covered by the Straits Steamship

Company, along the Straits of Malacca, up the east coast to Bangkok, up the west coast to Moulmein, over the sea to British and Dutch Borneo and the South Philippines and across the Straits of Malacca to the east coast of Sumatra. It also works in co-operation with its associated companies, the Siam Steam Navigation Co. Limited, which caters for the ports of Siam and the east coast of Malaya, the Sarawak Steamship Co. Ltd., the name of which indicates its functions, and the Hua Khiow Steamship Co. Ltd., which maintains the service between Singapore and Muar. In all over 100 ports are regularly served by these companies, from which it will be seen that this part of the world is thoroughly well catered for, as regards tourists and commercial men, and there can be little doubt that with the more frequent and accelerated aeroplane services in the near future, these portions of the Asiatic continent will be visited more frequently than ever before, now that the time has been so materially shortened by the opening up of these regions to aerial navigation.

The following morning, therefore, I motored down to the landing stage and promptly to time the hawsers were cast off, and the very interesting voyage northwards through the Malacca Straits was begun. The harbour of Singapore, surrounded by numberless islands, and almost landlocked, is one of the most interesting in the world, and as the steamer ploughs its way through the narrow channel beneath massive headlands, bristling with heavy guns for the defence of the port, the passengers' attention and interest is drawn to the many beauty spots of the surrounding hills to be seen on all sides. Away on the hill top the signal station, with its fluttering signals to ships entering and leaving the port, is a prominent feature of the

landscape, and the pleasantly situated bungalows perched at commanding positions must indeed be desirable residences, where day after day the ships of all nations are to be seen, from the 2,000 ton tramp to the 39,000 ton battleship. At last we steam through the narrows, and crests of foam at the bows announces that we are now full speed ahead through the sunlit green water with scattered Dutch islands on our port bow. All kinds of native craft hurry out of our way in obedience to our siren, and quaint, curiously built lighthouses loom on the horizon, the black plume on the horizon betokens the approach of a big liner on its way to China and Japan. And so reading, chatting and dozing the day passes until the lighthouse known as One Fathom Bank is seen in the far distance, which brings back to memory the almost tragic ending of a voyage when, twenty-five miles off its course, a commandeered Dutch steamer on which I was acting as third officer, almost finished her career through the miscalculation of the second officer, an episode duly chronicled by me in war time under the title "A close shave in the Malacca Straits" which made an exciting story. Daylight next morning found the *Kedah* swiftly cutting her way through the channel between Penang and the mainland, and before 9 a.m. the passengers were landing at the jetty from the tender, thus completing the short sea passage between Singapore and Penang. A white buoy in the channel marks the place where the *Emden* sunk the Russian cruiser in the war. Georgetown, the capital of the island of Penang, is picturesquely situated on the north-eastern shore opposite to the mainland, between which two ferry boats ply at frequent intervals, carrying all types of vehicles, in addition to passengers. The railway journey, curiously enough, between Penang

and Singapore commences with the ferryboat, railway tickets being issued for the journey on the jetty, and passengers' luggage being conveyed to the ferry on trollies running on lines the whole length of the landing stage. The straits present an everlasting scene of activity. From the shallow sampan flitting about the harbour on the lookout for fares, to the majestic liners bound for China and Japan, an almost bewildering display of ships from every part of the world find an anchorage, and the visitor to Penang will always find something of interest in the kaleidoscope presented to his gaze of the embarkation, and disembarkation in which the bustling little tenders attached to the various shipping companies, dart in and out among the ever-moving mass of shipping, carrying the world tourists and their belongings from ship to shore.

A motor journey round the island provides the visitor with an excellent opportunity of visiting the places of interest, as the winding road mostly skirting the coast unfolds at every turn of the road fresh vistas of tropical vegetation, verdure clad hills and enchanting views which on no account should be missed. The Snake Temple on the eastern side of the island is another object of interest, and of course the trip on the mountain railway to the Peak is the most widely patronised by visitors to Penang. From the summit a magnificent view of the island, the straits with the shipping can be seen to advantage, while on the opposite shore of the mainland a series of mountains provide a suitable background for one of the finest views to be seen in the East. The bazaar trade is chiefly in the hands of the Chinese, and the quaint Chinese business hieroglyphics mostly lettered in green and gold notify to all and sundry that John Chinaman has taken firm root in this locality,

and forms no inconsiderable part of the community in this part of the world.

Penang possesses two first class hotels in the Runnymede and the Eastern and Oriental, both situated picturesquely amidst delightful surroundings on the coast a little distance from the town.

XXVI

FROM PENANG TO BANGKOK

Two days enabled me to transact my business in Georgetown, and in order to join the plane from Singapore on which I intended to journey to Rangoon it was necessary to make a short railway journey to Alor Star, where a few miles to the north of the town the aerodrome is situated. On my arrival at the station a motor car quickly conveyed myself and suitcase to the rest house where I found several fellow travellers had already arrived, and a well served dinner was shortly followed by an early retirement so as to be up "with the lark" the following morning as an early start had to be made in order to arrive at Rangoon in the afternoon.

A knocking at my bedroom door while it was still dark, announced the hour of 4.30 a.m., so, much against my will—for it was a very comfortable bed—I rose, washed and dressed, and descending with my suitcase ready packed, enjoyed an early breakfast, and still in the darkness in a swiftly driven motor car we were rushing through the leafy lanes and soon found ourselves at the aerodrome around one side of which paraffin flares were burning, and we arrived to find the engines merrily turning as the mechanics were giving the finishing touches, swarming like ants over and around the fuselage of the plane leaving nothing to chance, but here as elsewhere the service moves like clockwork, giving the passenger a sense of security that his life is in the

safe keeping of efficient and competent British pilots.

Alor Star is one of the few places on earth where the constellations of the Great Bear and the Southern Cross can be seen simultaneously. It was a perfectly clear morning, the sun not having yet risen, nor the tuneful lark either, and to the north could be seen the seven stars of the Great Bear far more dazzling than when seen in the British Isles, while low down on the southern horizon the five stars of the Southern Cross glittered like diamonds in the clear atmosphere, while in other parts of the heavens several of the planets, amidst innumerable stars, formed a spectacle which well repaid our early rising. "All aboard," sung out one of the mechanics, so leaving with reluctance our astronomical observations the four passengers entered the plane, the door closed, an added acceleration of the propellers and we were scudding rapidly along the aerodrome guided by the paraffin flares which stretched along one side of the flying ground, then upwards into the starlit sky, and the twinkling lights of Alor Star flickered beneath us, as with a sweep we journeyed north on our trip to Rangoon. Soon we were over the little town of Singora, situated amongst the numerous lagoons which are to be found along the eastern coast of Malaya, then crossing at 4,000 feet altitude the island of Ko Samari, striking the mainland again at Chumporn in Siamese territory, for we had now crossed the frontier into Siam, our course continuing over the open sea, known as the Gulf of Siam, not, however, losing sight of the coast, and once again crossing the land as we neared Bangkok, the river Menam winding its way on our starboard bow, being the next object of interest. Bangkok is some fourteen miles from the coast, on the banks of

the river, and almost before we had realised the fact of its proximity we were heading directly over the well laid out city, its prominent buildings being easily discernible, the King's palace being particularly noticeable.

We crossed the whole length of the city from south to north, and then made a bee line for the aerodrome, some fourteen miles from the city, and on this spacious enclosure we alighted, having travelled the 570 miles from Alor Star in five and a half hours, and quite ready for the substantial second breakfast which awaited our arrival.

Three quarters of an hour later we were again on our way with a feeling of regret that the Siamese authorities prohibit all photography while over Siam, for what reason no one knows, for views of every country in the world taken from aeroplanes can be purchased at any picture postcard shop, but nevertheless while flying over Siamese territory our precious cameras are under seal in the baggage room, and the passengers must content themselves with the impressions they can gather while passing over tempting views which would make —if photographed—interesting mementoes of the journey. Some day possibly the Siamese Government may relent, and so make the aerial journey much more interesting to photographers.

XXVII

FROM BANGKOK TO RANGOON AND ON TO CALCUTTA

THE next stage of our journey was Rangoon, a distance of 364 miles from Bangkok, and as there were some mountain ranges which it is necessary to cross a height of some 8,000 feet was necessary, and so at Moulmein we left the coast and headed direct for Rangoon, which city was duly reached at 2.30 p.m., the country after crossing the mountains being chiefly flat and uninteresting until the windings of the Irrawaddy announced the fact that Rangoon had been reached, and soon after landing we were whirling along in a fast car to Minto Mansions where we were to spend the night. A quick lunch, and a run into the town enabled me to pick up a few orders from customers I had not seen on the outward journey. The following morning was appreciated by the fact that for once no early rising was necessary, as a start at 9 a.m. was sufficiently early, and the extra hours in bed were indeed a luxury, so this morning breakfast at 8 a.m. gave us ample time for a substantial meal, and unlimited conversation with our fellow passengers, with whom I exchanged views on aerial travel, and the time saved to a commercial man in this latest form of transport. The "Astrea" had already been brought out of the hangar, on to the concrete and awaiting our arrival, so again mounting the scales which had by now become almost one of the day's duties, as the problem of weight is still a matter of importance in aerial travel.

We were soon aloft and heading northward over the Irrawaddy, and rising steadily the mountain ranges appeared on the horizon. We circled over the little town of Sandoway, which possesses an aerodrome which though not generally used by planes would be useful as an emergency landing ground should necessity arise in a forced landing. The aerodrome is well situated on a bend of the river, the town being situated on the opposite bank. Now skirting the coast we cross numerous lagoons, the colours of which varied from deep blue to dazzling green, with fishing boats with their white sails making a pretty picture on the waters. Then what all aerial travellers will have noticed on this portion of the coast, the three long narrow islands that point due south, like a three pronged fork which are observed as we approach the town of Akyab, where we alight for lunch or "tiffin" as we call it in the East. Then flying parallel along the Arakan coastline, we are shortly crossing the Sunderbands after leaving Cox's Bazar and the Bay of Bengal behind and finally dropping gracefully on the turf at Dum Dum Aerodrome at Calcutta.

XXVIII

FROM CALCUTTA TO KARACHI

A FEW days' interval at Calcutta before the departure of the home plane enabled me to complete various business deals, and it was with feelings of satisfaction on the completion of a successful journey that I could now look forward with anticipation to the rapid journey to England, having now no need for breaking the trip at the different towns, as this had been done on the outward trip. In less than a week I should be treading the streets of London, with a trip of some twenty thousand miles to my credit, never before accomplished by any of my competitors.

The first stage of the journey from Calcutta to Karachi, a distance of no less than 1,500 miles, is so far the longest day's run on the time table, so a very early start was essential. At 4 o'clock in the morning I hurriedly dressed and was motoring through the deserted streets of Calcutta and its environs, the only occupants being the coolies busily engaged in washing the roads, and here and there a solitary policeman keeping his lonely vigil, and no doubt waiting impatiently to be relieved, and to end his night vigil over the sleeping city. Dum Dum at last, and at the entrance of the great hangar stood the four-engined monoplane which now awaited the mails and passengers before taking the air. We were soon aboard, our baggage and selves having been duly weighed on the scales, and we were taxi-ing across the aerodrome to where the paraffin flares extended,

alongside of which we were to travel for some few hundred yards into the wind, without the guidance of which in the darkness the take off would have been no easy matter. When almost at the extremity of the course, a heavy mail in addition to the passengers, making a long run necessary we rose, and, sweeping over the hangar, set our course almost due west and the lights of Calcutta and the river Hooghly were left in the distance, as the clocks were chiming the half hour after five o'clock. A distance of some 472 miles had to be traversed before the first stop at Allahabad, and having already described in detail the journey across India on the outward journey, it is unnecessary to repeat the description, and only necessary to say that after an uneventful five hours' travelling we descended on the Allahabad aerodrome where two passengers descended, picking up three others, depositing mails, and collecting the mails for England, and last but not least partaking of a substantial breakfast we were in the air again at 11.30 a.m. heading now for Cawnpore, a distance of about 120 miles, which was accomplished in an hour and a quarter.

Only a few minutes stay here in delivering and picking up mails, when once more in the air we set our course for Delhi, and soon the windings of the Jumna became visible, the tombs of ancient Delhi, and in the distance the dazzling white buildings of New Delhi now an accomplished fact, and now reinstated the Capital of India and the seat of government. Here we took on two more passengers, leaving three behind and after "tiffin" we were once more on our way to Jodhpur, and, pushing on at full speed, arrived at Karachi just as night had fallen.

XXIX

FROM KARACHI TO SHARJAH

THE next morning after a comfortable night's rest at the Carlton Hotel the motor car from Imperial Airways picked me up at the hotel, and conveyed me to the Drigh aerodrome some eight miles distant, the start being scheduled for 9.30 a.m. But we were delayed through the non-arrival of the Punjab mail, and it was not until 10.30, an hour late, that we made a start, and soaring above the hangar built to receive the ill-fated R.101 airship, we were flying above the harbour with its shipping, and making a bee line across the sea for Gwadar on the coast of Baluchistan. Some twenty minutes were occupied in covering the desert where low lying hills stretching north and south at a height of several hundred feet with sharp edges on their summits like a coxcomb, were the chief objects of interest. Flying at a distance of perhaps ten miles from the coast of Baluchistan we sighted about noon the promontory of Ormaru, in shape like some giant Saumarian basking on the deep blue water with its head pointing due west, connected by a narrow isthmus of sand with the mainland. We have now travelled 160 miles from Karachi, and from this point a long low rugged ridge of mountains skirt the coast, the sky line of which resembles the jagged teeth of a saw, and sighting Bomis in the distance we approach Pesni, eighty miles distant from Ormaru. During this portion of the trip the passengers of the *Helena* are entertained by the dolphin-like gambols of a school of giant Ray fish which from

time to time leap from the water and disappear in a cloud of white foam amongst the deep blue of the sea. Here also were to be seen great quantities of brilliant red seaweed, stretching in long finger-like formation over a considerable area which from a view point of 3,000 feet presented a remarkable and noteworthy spectacle. Another sixty miles brings us in sight of Gwadar, our first stop after leaving Karachi, and here is to be seen a most spectacular sight in the almost exact reproduction of a cathedral on a mountain-side where nature seems to have given men the idea of architecture of which he has since made ample use. The cathedral hill at close range, for the plane passes the spot at no greater distance than a few hundred yards, makes an impressive sight, its sides carved out by the rain and weather into multitudinous and fantastic shapes and designs meet the eye of the observer, while slightly in the background the mountain resolves itself into an almost perfect representation of an English cathedral, and being of lighter colour than the surrounding objects, is seen to special advantage against the darker background of the base. On the shore nearby is to be seen a curious phenomena of a miniature volcano known locally as "The Eye of the Sea" consisting of a circular orifice on the shore in which the sea water rises to the surface, and which rises and falls with the tides. We are now descending rapidly, and skirting the western extremity of the Cathedral rock, we raise a cloud of dust as the landing wheels of the plane plough their way through the loose sand of the desert, and draw up near to a small hut which seems to be the only habitation within sight on this deserted spot of the British Empire. This is the last bit of British soil as once more aloft after depositing the mails we pass the Persian frontier, three miles from the coast.

XXX

FROM GWADAR TO SHARJAH

We have now a hop of 450 miles to traverse between Gwadar and Sharjah, our next stopping place, situated on the western shore of the Oman peninsula at the southern entrance of the Persian Gulf. For miles along the Persian coast are to be seen similar hills of the same construction as Cathedral Hill, and again nature has worked out an architectural scheme of her own in what appears to be an almost perfect reproduction of a medieval castle and strongholds reminiscent of the Middle Ages, and the imagination has no difficulty in repopulating the castles, keeps, and quadrangles with the armoured and helmeted knights of long ago. One could almost imagine a column of warriors with colours flying emerging from one of the gateways with trumpets blowing as they marched to meet the foe. Flying closer inland we now lose the hills and the country loses its picturesque appearance and changes to long stretches of sandy wastes with long low hills to be seen far away on the northern horizon. Keeping a minimum distance of three miles from the coast, for all planes traversing the coast of Persia must keep this distance from shore, unless a special permit has been secured. Ahead some miles distant can now be made out the Persian Airport of Jask, situated at the extremity of a long promontory of sand, at which formerly the planes of Imperial Airways alighted. Now that the course has been diverted to the western shores

of the Persian Gulf, Jask is only seen at a distance from the sea, as we steer straight across the Gulf of Oman, where in the dim distance can be distinguished the high mountains on the opposite coast. As the mountains extend to a height of over 4,000 feet, we steadily increase our altitude in order to attain sufficient height to clear the jagged tips of the mountain range. We have now some 160 miles to go before reaching our destination for the night, as Sharjah is situated on the far side of the mountains on the opposite coast to that towards which we are now rapidly approaching. Steadily rising at some 3,000 feet we suddenly enter the clouds, fast swirling masses of vapour sweeping past the windows of the plane, and we instinctively draw our rugs over our knees as the temperature falls appreciably. Higher and higher we fly until at last we leave the clouds beneath us, and at 5,000 feet clear the topmost heights with the setting sun full in our faces, lighting up the surrounding peaks in contrast to the deep shadows on the eastward side. A magnificent panorama unfolds itself and each passenger is engaged in watching the fleeting landscape as we fly between the crests of the mountain tops, a fresh vista disclosed at every moment, as we career across the summits of the mountain range towards the setting sun. Evidence of the volcanic origin is apparent on every side, for as we gaze down into some chasm, the sides glisten like molten steel, as if newly poured out of some gigantic cauldron in a molten state, when the earth was "without form and void." It was a never-to-be-forgotten sight, and the flight across the Oman mountains is one of the most interesting of the whole journey. We ran into the clouds again when perhaps half-way across, but they soon cleared away, and we had a superb view of the

whole range northward where it terminated in the Persian Gulf. Descending on the western side to 3,000 feet the character of the land changes completely, for it is broken up into a vast series of ridges which extend as far as the eye can see, leaving shallow hollows as if at some time in the earth's history the sea had receded from the land, leaving a cheerless devastated area, in which no living being has existence, a vast desert of sand, ridges and hollows, and a sense of relief is experienced as the plane at last approaches the sea. We are flying rapidly westwards and racing the sun as he sinks below the western horizon. The clock at the end of the cabin shows the time to be 6.30 p.m. whereas my watch, unaltered from the previous day, tells me that it is almost 8 p.m. We have gained no less than one and a half hours on the day's run. Far ahead we espy the Rest House amid the desert sands at Sharjah, and on nearer approach when its outlines become more distinct, it is seen to be a squarely built fort, built by the British Royal Air Force a little more than twelve months before. We alighted outside the barbed wire enclosure by which the fort is surrounded, and taxied through an opening in the wire entanglements which was closed again after our entrance, as a measure of precaution, against attacks by wandering tribes of Bedouin Arabs, which are still a possibility in this part of the world. Dismounting, we were more than ever confirmed at the warlike aspect of the fort, by being welcomed by a detachment or bodyguard of loyal Bedouin soldiers, armed with long carbines, which, with their picturesque costume and accoutrements, gave one the impression we had been suddenly transported back into medieval times when armed force was the chief arbiter in every quarrel. Our bodyguard, however, seemed harmless enough, and

were gratified at my suggestion to pose for a photograph and which was quickly accomplished.

An interesting incident was the arrival from Baghdad of the outward plane, and the evening was pleasantly passed by the interchange of views and experiences by the passengers of the two planes meeting at this half way house in the desert.